

THE ELMS**Page 1****NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARK NOMINATION**

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

1. NAME OF PROPERTY

Historic Name: THE ELMS

Other Name/Site Number: Edward J. Berwind House

2. LOCATION

Street & Number: Bellevue Avenue

Not for publication: N/A

City/Town: Newport

Vicinity: N/A

State: RI

County: Newport

Code: 005

Zip Code: 02840

3. CLASSIFICATION

Ownership of Property

Private: XPublic-Local: Public-State: Public-Federal:

Category of Property

Building(s): XDistrict: Site: Structure: Object:

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing

 3 3 3 81 90

Noncontributing

 buildings sites structures 1 objects 1 TotalNumber of Contributing Resources Previously Listed in the National Register: 90

Name of Related Multiple Property Listing: N/A

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4. STATE/FEDERAL AGENCY CERTIFICATION

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this _____ nomination _____ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property _____ meets _____ does not meet the National Register Criteria.

Signature of Certifying Official_____
Date_____
State or Federal Agency and Bureau

In my opinion, the property _____ meets _____ does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of Commenting or Other Official_____
Date_____
State or Federal Agency and Bureau**5. NATIONAL PARK SERVICE CERTIFICATION**

I hereby certify that this property is:

____ Entered in the National Register _____
____ Determined eligible for the National Register _____
____ Determined not eligible for the National Register _____
____ Removed from the National Register _____
____ Other (explain): _____

Signature of Keeper_____
Date of Action

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6. FUNCTION OR USE

Historic:	DOMESTIC LANDSCAPE	Sub:	Single Dwelling Garden Street Furniture/Object
Current:	RECREATION & CULTURE LANDSCAPE	Sub:	Museum Garden Street Furniture/Object

7. DESCRIPTION

ARCHITECTURAL CLASSIFICATION: Late 19th & 20th Century Revivals: Beaux Arts

MATERIALS:

Foundation:	Granite
Walls:	Indiana Limestone
Roof:	Slag, Slate
Other:	Copper (Gutters & Leaders)

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Page 4**Describe Present and Historic Physical Appearance.**

"The Elms" was built between 1899 and 1901 as an 18th-century French-style backdrop for the art collections of Mr and Mrs. Edward Julius Berwind. The architect, Horace Trumbauer of Philadelphia, modeled the house specifically after the Chateau d'Asnieres at Asnieres-sur-Seine, France (1750). This use of a specific historical model to mirror a particular historic period of architecture was an accepted premise in American design. The funds required to accomplish such a monumental task totaled \$1,400,000. The Berwinds employed the French firm of Jules Allard and Sons for the interior furnishings and to integrate the collections of the Berwinds into the overall design of the house.

The dimensions of the house are 120 feet by 60 feet and consist of eleven bays and three stories. The garden (west) facade is distinguished by a central, curved, projecting block (three bays wide) decorated with statuary. The statuary includes statues of Aphrodite and Apollo by the sculptor Guillaume Coustou II (1716-1777), flanking the main door, above which are reproductions in poly-resin of busts of the French writers Moliere and Racine done originally by Nicolas Pineau (1684-1754) for the Chateau d'Asnieres. The balustrade along the roof conceals several chimneys, while supporting four sculptures at its corners: Neptune and Thetis, Demeter, Nymph riding a Dolphin, and Jupiter with Nymph.

The East facade faces the street and is less ornate than the Garden (west) facade. The main block is interrupted by a central block (three bays wide) that projects out from the symmetrical composition. Each wing has four sets of large windows in the French style with decorative masks on the upper frame of the second floor. The central projecting block has three openings leading to the interior on the first floor. These entrances are framed by four columns *in-antis*. The second floor of this block is defined by a string course topped by an open balustrade surmounted by four decorative urns. Above the windows on the second floor level is a bracketed cornice and a closed balustrade that defines the roof.

The following description of The Elms is from the *Newport Herald*, July 1, 1901, written shortly after the mansion's formal opening:

The house is built of white stone in the style of Louis XIV with its central "pavilion" projecting beyond the alignment of the two wings.... The sober and yet graceful architecture of the building, the perfection of the carving, where any has been used, its thorough conformity with the feeling of the period chosen by the architect, Horace Trumbauer of Philadelphia, illustrates a quality so rarely found in modern buildings, that is, a rich simplicity.¹

THE MANSION: FIRST FLOOR

The plan of The Elms derives its basic formula from the 18th-century Chateau d'Asnieres. A central salon dominates the middle of the building and all main rooms are aligned in sequence along the west side of the house in order to take advantage of the views of the gardens and to provide an elegant progression for social spectacle. At The Elms, the primary features of the house—foyer, ballroom and major reception rooms—are arranged along an axis that brings the visitor into the garden. This approach to planning the house is an embodiment of the ideals of 18th-century French architecture.

Stair Hall, Gallery Hall

Immediately upon entering The Elms from the East facade, the visitor passes through the foyer or Stair Hall, framed by two large urns of green marble and pink granite, each with

¹ *Newport Herald*, July 1, 1901, p. 3.

four bronze female figures. The urns bear the name of the decorator, Allard et Fils of Paris, who was responsible for crafting the details of the period rooms. The walls are of limestone, with purple Breccia marble pilasters and columns with bronze capitals and bases. The floors are of white marble bordered in green and are the same as those in the Gallery Hall. The stairs are of pure white Italian marble. They rise from the Stair Hall to the Gallery.

On the wall opposite the entrance, on either side of the Ballroom door, are two early 18th-century oil paintings depicting episodes in the history of Scipio Africanus, the ancient Roman general who conquered Carthage. These paintings were part of a series bought by Mr. Berwind from the Ca' Corner in Venice. The painting to the north of the Ballroom door depicts *Scipio Declining Regal Honors*, circa 1706, and is by Paolo Pagani (1661-1716). The one to the south is *The Continnence of Scipio*, also circa 1706, and is recognized to be the work of Giovanni Antonio Pellegrini (1675-1741). These two paintings were restored in 1981 to their original quality by the Preservation Society of Newport County.

Over the door to the Ballroom, facing the Main Hall, is a bronze relief of the helmeted Athena, goddess of wisdom and war. Beneath her are Hercules and two cherubs, masquerading as Athena and Hercules. Over the right cherub is the name of the decorator, Allard et Fils.

Ballroom

The Louis XV style Ballroom is at the core of the building, the place occupied by the Salon in the Chateau d'Asnieres. This room was the scene of lavish parties, including the 1901 housewarming party hosted by the Berwinds to announce the formal opening of The Elms to Newport society. Allard et Fils crafted the Louis XV style paneling with plaster shell and floral ornaments. Above the doors are paintings depicting Leda and Io, copies of the originals from Asnieres by Jean-Baptiste Marie Pierre (1713-1789). The white stucco relief decorations of the doors, paneling, and cornice are continued in an elaborate ceiling frieze and center medallion of winged cherubs. The crystal chandelier is original to the room, as are the ormolu wall sconces and Louis XV andirons. The following description from 1901 is still accurate today:

In this gallery, doors open leading into the principal rooms. The wide open door opposite the main entrance opens into a ball room 50 x 45 feet. This room is decorated in the style of Louis XV, by Allard of New York, who has executed all such work there, and the richly-carved woodwork is soberly painted in cream and white with no gilding at all except the mirror frames. All the details of the ornamentation on the walls and cornice have been worked out in the feeling of the period in its minutest detail. The window curtains are made of a broche silk executed in Lyons after a piece of old silk selected by Mr. Berwind. The richly carved furniture made of unique models and the marble mantel piece of pavonazzo, enriched in gilt bronze complete the scheme of this room.²

South Alcove

The South Alcove was used to display decorative objects. The display cabinet on the north wall of the alcove contains 18th-century Sevres urns, decorated with Turkish scenes on a brick red color ground. The same purple Breccia marble from Italy, as used in the Stair Hall and Gallery Hall, was used for the door and window trims, and Allard used the same marble in the cabinets for the purpose of maintaining a unified design.

² *Ibid.*, p. 3.

North Alcove

The North Alcove also has display cases. These contain a collection of jade and some fans.

Library

The Library is in the style of Henry IV, with high wainscoting and walls of inlaid walnut hung with red damask. The center table, fireplace mantel, and inlaid bookcases were designed by Allard, and the table in particular displays the exaggerated proportions and classical ornament typical of 16th-century French design. The mantel piece consists of white carved stone with the upper part of richly carved walnut. The walnut carving frames a terra-cotta copy of a bas-relief of the Madonna and Child by Della Robbia from the Church of San Jacopo di Ripoli in Florence.

The most notable appointments of the Library are two terra-cotta portrait busts, one of the French writer Moliere, the other of Racine. They are 19th century casts of the 18th century originals by the French sculptor Nicolas Pineau. These busts were originally on the garden facade of The Elms. In the interest of preserving their pristine appearance, new poly-resin castings have taken the place of these originals on the garden (west) facade of the house.

Conservatory³

The Conservatory was inspired by the orangeries of 18th-century France, and it is here that the relationship between house and garden is most pronounced. Mirrors, placed opposite the windows to reflect the garden view, are framed by trellising done in the 18th-century French manner. The fountain and plant basins are of Rouge Royale marble and are decorated with bronze horses and sea deities.

³ In some sources denoted as "Palm Room."

In the corners are marble figures representing the seasons. There is a carved marble urn with dancing cherubs and fawns in full relief. The sculpture group between the west windows depicts cherubs playing at music and is by the sculptor Arriglini.

The Brussels tapestry on the north wall (circa 1720) depicts Neptune; it was part of a series of tapestries entitled *The Triumph of the Gods* woven by the Reydamers-Leyniers workshop.

Drawing Room

The Drawing Room served as the formal sitting room of The Elms where guests assembled after dinner. The woodwork by Allard is in early Louis XVI style with Neo-Classical ornament in molded plaster. Lunettes of grey monochrome, *en grisaille*, are on the north and south walls and are enclosed by elaborately carved wood frames.

The dominant aspect of the Drawing Room is its 18th-century ceiling painting. It depicts the god of the north wind, Boreas, being driven from the sky by Spring accompanied by the gentle winds, or Zephyrs, and is attributed to the Dutch artist Jacob de Witt (1695-1754). This painting, along with several other 18th-century paintings in The Elms, escaped the auction block by virtue of having been cemented to the ceiling with white lead during its installation, a factor which prevented its precipitous removal. The *Newport Herald* of July 1, 1901 described the Drawing Room as being "in the same strain of soberness as the ballroom; there is no gilding on the ornamentation, and the room is entirely painted in grey and white, but the carving on woodwork is of the most perfect kind that can be produced in these times."⁴

Dining Room

The Dining Room, to the north of the Ballroom, was designed to display a collection of early 18th-century Venetian paintings purchased by Mr. Berwind from the Ca' Corner in Venice. The paintings (circa 1706) are of the same series as those in The Elms' Gallery Hall and illustrate scenes from the life of the Roman general Scipio Africanus. On the north wall is *The Triumph of Scipio* by Pagani (restored in 1988), and on the south wall is *Syphax Before Scipio*, attributed to Giambattista Piazzetta (1682-1754) (or possibly his teacher Antonio Molinari). The oak paneling and the doors of San Domingo mahogany were chosen especially to reproduce the interiors of the room for which the paintings were originally made. The fireplace is of agate (red stone), onyx (white stone) and marble (green), and is framed by a ceiling-high pediment supported by carved Ionic columns.

The coffered ceiling is of molded plaster, grained and painted to imitate oak. Each coffer is decorated with the winged lion of Saint Mark, the patron saint of Venice. Four custom-made crystal chandeliers hang in the four corners of the room.

⁴ *Newport Herald*, July 1, 1901, p. 3.

Breakfast Room

The Berwinds required a Chinoiserie Breakfast Room as a setting for Chinese lacquered panels. This style of decoration, which became fashionable in turn of the century America, was originally developed in 18th-century Europe due to the popularity of Oriental porcelains and lacquer-work and is a Western interpretation of Chinese design. The black and gold lacquer wall panels are in the style of the K'ang Hsi period (1662-1722).

The paneling is of oak highlighted with gilding. The sidetables by Allard et Fils combine Western details with Oriental figures, which repeat in the textiles and plaster ornament of the ceiling. The fireplace is of peach marble and matches the room's furnishings.

Main Staircase

The steps of the grand staircase from the Gallery Hall to the Second floor are of Carrara marble and the railing is wrought iron and bronze. The walls, continuing the style of the Stair Hall and Gallery Hall, are of limestone with pilasters made of purple Breccia marble. Eighteenth-century tapestries line the stair wall to the second floor and were woven in the Werniers workshop; they are based on the drawings by Teniers at Lille, France, circa 1740.

The ceiling of the stair hall contains a large ceiling mural from the Palazzo Duodo in Venice, the work of the 18th-century muralist Francesco Fontebasso (1709-1769), "considered to be the finest example of his work in the country."⁵

SECOND FLOOR

The second floor of The Elms contains seven bedrooms, six baths, a sitting room, and a linen closet, all in the style of Louis XV and Louis XVI. The design of the second floor hall "reproduces a disposition of the hall down stairs; it forms a long gallery nearly the entire length of the house where all the bed rooms and apartments open."⁶ Two rare Gothic tapestries, woven in Tournai during the first quarter of the 16th century, hang in the hall; they are from the Widener Collection. The pilasters of the second floor hall are of the same purple Breccia marble as the first floor hall and the walls are of Indiana limestone. The interiors of the second floor bedrooms are described in general in the *Newport Herald* of 1901:

The woodwork has been kept in perfect white, but in each room the character is given by the exquisite choice of the color of the silk hangings selected by Mrs. Berwind. The furniture is of richly carved wood enamelled white with

⁵ Jordy, William H., and Christopher P. Monkhouse. *Buildings on Paper*. Brown University, Rhode Island Historical Society and Rhode Island School of Design, 1982, p. 178.

⁶ *Newport Herald*, July 1, 1901. p. 3.

the variety of shapes and outlines to be found only in the two styles used. The spacious bath room adjoining each bed room are appointed with the luxury and comforts known only in America.⁷

More specific descriptions of particular rooms follow.

Rose Room

The furnishings of the Rose Room—the chamber to the northeast of the stair hall—most of which are original to The Elms, are in the Louis XVI style. The rug is a Spanish Savonnerie made for Sloane and Co.

Satinwood Room

The furniture of the Satinwood Room, to the southeast of the Stair Hall, is made of satinwood. It is in the Neo-Classical style of Robert Adam (1728-1792), an English architect and decorator. Most of the pieces are hand-painted in the manner of Angelica Kauffman (1740-1807), an artist who frequently worked with Adam on interior and furniture designs. The carpet is a late 19th-century Fereghan and the wall covering is a cotton/rayon facsimile of the original silk, reproduced by Schumacher and Co.

Mr. Berwind's Bedroom and Bath

Mr. Berwind's bedroom is located to the south of the Sitting Room and the fireplace is of ox-blood marble with gilt bronze mounts. The walls are covered in red silk and the carpet is a late 19th-century Khorassan. The bath contains a sink of translucent white onyx.

Mrs. Berwind's Bedroom

This room, located in the southwest corner of the floor, is in the Louis XVI style with cream-colored woodwork and is much larger than Mr. Berwind's bedroom. The walls are covered with custom-woven celadon green damask with borders of coordinated green, gold, and cream material. These fabrics are accurate reproductions of the room's original French silks. The elaborate window hangings and bed hangings in the room are of reproduced silk *lisere*. The adjoining bathroom contains a bathtub and porcelain washstand accented in a painted laurel and swag motif. The fireplace on the north wall adjoins Mr. Berwind's fireplace.

The Sitting Room

The Sitting Room, located above the ballroom in the central bay section of the west side of the house, was used as a gathering spot for the Berwinds and their house guests. The Preservation Society of Newport County reproduced the original red silk wall fabrics and draperies in 1985. The room is panelled in Louis XVI woodwork. The rest is very simple. There is a fireplace on the north wall.

Gold Bedroom

The Gold Bedroom, located to the north of the Sitting Room, still retains its original silk wallcoverings, as well as the original suite of Louis XV style furniture by Allard et Fils.

There are also two other bedrooms located on the second floor: The Van Alen Room in the southeast corner and the Green Bedroom in the northwest corner. A small maid's room,

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

adjacent to the servant's stair hall, completes the second floor plan.

THIRD FLOOR

The third floor of The Elms was devoted to staff quarters. Horace Trumbauer, to preserve the design of the Chateau d'Asnieres model for the house, concealed these third floor quarters through an exterior balustrade.

BASEMENT

The kitchen, staff dining room, two butler's pantries and staff staircase form a complete view of a state of the art service complex in the early 1900's. The walls and ceilings throughout the service rooms are covered in white enamel tile, the woodwork is of oak, and the windows are screened by ornamental metal grilles.

The kitchen is illustrative of those in other great houses in Newport at the turn of the century. The stove is by the French firm of Duparquet, Moneuse, and Huot and may be operated by coal or wood. The butler's pantry off of the kitchen is part of a two level pantry designed to serve the house. The basement level is for the storage of items and the loading of food. The first level is adjacent to the formal dining room and breakfast room and was used for serving, for the washing and storing of china, and features a safe for silver. White tile was used in the Kitchen for sanitary reasons.

THE GARDENS AND GROUNDS

The gardens of The Elms were developed from 1902 to 1914 under the direction of Horace Trumbauer, who produced the drawings and plans for the grand allee, marble pavilions, and sunken garden. The gardens were originally conceived as a place for staging grand entertainments and as an outdoor sculpture gallery. The terrace outside the Ballroom is dominated by a large sculpture entitled *Madness of Athemas* (1880) by Pio Fede. At the end of the lawn is a copy of the *Fontana delle Tartarughe* (1584) by Taddeo Landini in Rome. Added to this were two animal sculpture groups in bronze, which were modeled after groups in the Tulieres garden, Paris, by the sculptor August Nicolas Cain.

From 1902 to 1907, the gardens were a picturesque park with specimen trees and a small lily pond located near the present sunken garden. After 1907, however, its design was influenced by newer theories in American landscape architecture. In 1893, Charles Adams Platt had published his essay "Italian Gardens" in *Harper's* detailing formal European garden design, which was followed in 1904 by Edith Wharton's *Italian Villas and their Gardens*. Wharton and Platt were known and read in Newport circles, and Trumbauer reworked The Elms' garden to reflect this new emphasis on reviving classical European garden design. Wharton espoused the philosophy that "the garden must be studied in relation to the house,"⁸ and indeed, Trumbauer "related the terraces and the gardens to the residence not only through design but also through function: he made them vital extensions of the house, rooms out-of-doors."⁹ The lily pond that had originally existed provided an ideal natural depression for the Italian sunken garden that succeeded it. The specimen trees still exist in

⁸ Wharton, Edith. "Italian Villas and Their Gardens" New York: Da Capo Press, 1904.

⁹ Perschler, Martin. "The Gardens at The Elms: An Introduction" unpublished report, The Preservation Society of Newport County, 1992, p. 2.

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the main garden park.¹⁰ There are eight surrounding the fountain (C2) in the lower garden, with a particularly fine specimen a few feet north of the fountain.

The classical landscape that Trumbauer produced, with ornate fountains and statuary, was inspired by the European gardens of the Renaissance and Baroque periods. The marble pavilions were inspired by 18th-century French garden pavilions. The gardens were not a direct copy of a particular Italian or French garden; rather they were a free interpretation of a classical landscape using elements borrowed from both the Italian Renaissance and 17th- and 18th-century France.

Stable and Garage

The stable and garage were built in 1911 on land owned by Ida Powel Johnson which Berwind later purchased and added to his estate. They are modeled after an 1898 pavilion by the architect Henry Goury (b.1850) for the chateau at Louveciennes, France, built originally for Madame du Barry. The complex has space for ten carriages, stalls for six horses and room for eight automobiles, as well as harness repairs, laundry rooms and living quarters.

General Engineering Facts

Although The Elms was a summer residence, it was heated year-round by an elaborate central heating system. There were three boilers in the basement and the fuel was coal. When the coal was delivered, it was brought to Dixon Street and lowered into small railroad cars that ran on a track in a tunnel extending from the street to the basement. In this way, coal or ash was never transported within public view.

There was no electricity in this part of Newport in 1901, so Berwind had a generator installed in the basement. The light fixtures were made for the house and they were always electrified.

Since the Berwinds had no children of their own, The Elms passed to Mr. Berwind's sister Julia (1865-1961) at the death of Edward in 1936. Julia died childless in 1961 and a nephew, Charles Dunlap, inherited the property and sold many of the furnishings at auction and the estate to a developer. To protect The Elms from alteration, the Preservation Society of Newport County raised the funds to buy the house and opened it to the public in 1962. Today, much of the original furniture has been returned, and missing pieces have been replaced with historically appropriate items from other museums and private collections. Every possible effort has been made to restore The Elms to its original appearance.

LIST OF CONTRIBUTING RESOURCES

Buildings

Main House
Stable
Garage

Structures

2 Marble Garden Pavilions

¹⁰ The statuary and fountains are individually listed with the garden sketch map at the end of this nomination.

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Sites

Upper Garden Terrace
Park of Specimen Trees
Lower (Sunken) Garden

Objects

2 Main Entrance Gates
1 Stable Courtyard Gate
29 Garden Sculptures
2 Benches
44 Urns
3 Fountains
81

NON-CONTRIBUTING RESOURCES**Structures**

Parking Lots

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8. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

Nationally: X Statewide: Locally: Applicable National
Register Criteria:A B X C X D Criteria Considerations
(Exceptions):A B C D E F G

NHL Criteria: 2 & 4

NHL Theme [1987]: XVI. Architecture

M. Period Revivals (1870-1940)

5. Neo-Classical (1890-1915)

XXX. American Ways of Life

F. Industrial Wealth of the Last Half of 19th Century

Areas of Significance:

Architecture
Social History

Period(s) of Significance: 1899-1936

Significant Dates: 1899-1901, 1902-1914

Significant Person(s):

Edward J. Berwind (1848-1936)
Horace Trumbauer (1869-1938)

Cultural Affiliation:

N/A

Architect/Builder:

Horace Trumbauer [house and gardens]
J. Allard et Fils [interiors]
Alavoine et Cie [interiors]
Ernest W. Bowditch [gardens]
Bruce Butterton [gardens]

State Significance of Property, and Justify Criteria, Criteria Considerations, and Areas and Periods of Significance Noted Above.

"The Elms," the Edward J. Berwind estate, is significant for its architectural and landscape design of the Classical Revival Style in the period from 1900 through the 1920s. In addition, Edward J. Berwind was a leading figure in the American coal industry, and Horace Trumbauer was one of the outstanding architects of that era.

By the early 1900's, Newport's role as the most fashionable and elite summer resort made it a laboratory for experimenting with the architecture of leisure. Therefore, Newport became the logical site for the construction of the American "*maison de plaisance*," or pleasure pavilion, a design concept and architectural form of French origin that sought as its ideal a perfect unification of house and garden. The French Chateau d'Asnieres (1750-51), the prototype for The Elms, was a *maison de plaisance*. It was built by the architect Jacques Mansart (1709-1776), Comte de Sagonne, for the Marquis d'Argenson as a retreat north of Paris, complete with terraced gardens on the Seine. The *maison de plaisance* was an important building type, appearing in France in the 17th century, and finding its fullest expression by the mid-18th century.¹ The garden pavilions of the French aristocracy were adapted to suit a similar social class in American society at the turn of the century. The Elms exemplifies the use of specific period models in architectural design that was typical of the architecture of the period from 1890 through the 1920s. The academic use of historic sources and the unity of house and garden serving a social function distinguish The Elms as one of the finest French period house and garden complexes in America.

Mark Hewitt notes:

During the late 1880s, both patrons and architects were attracted to French classicism as a new approach for estates and gardens with formal, aristocratic pretensions. So pervasive was the French influence that in 1899 the American Institute of Architects devoted its convention proceedings to the impact of the Beaux-Arts on the architectural profession.²

The gardens of The Elms are also significant as "the best of the surviving Newport palace gardens," due to the classical design of Horace Trumbauer.³ Its eleven acres are laid out in the manner of a series of "snapshots" that leads the viewer on a tour of picturesque scenes, each possessing its own sense of closure in landscape design. The terraces surrounding the house "provided the viewing platform so intrinsic to a French-style garden," raising the visitor to a position whereby he or she could observe the beauty of the garden, while at the same time appreciating it as an architectural extension of the house.⁴ The terraces also "eased the transition from the Ballroom to the open air, and, to the credit of their architect, dissolved the theoretical boundary between architecture and nature."⁵ It was intrinsic to the *maison de plaisance* that the boundary between the living areas of the house and the leisure

¹ Blondel, Jacques-Francois. *Architecture Francoise...* Paris: Jombert, 1752.

² Hewitt, Mark. *The Architect and the American Country House*. New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1990, pp. 72-76.

³ Griswold, Mac and Eleanor Weller. "Green Grandeur: American Estate Gardening in the French Style, 1890-1940, from *Antiques* (September, 1991), p. 392.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 393.

⁵ Perschler, Martin. "The Gardens at The Elms: An Introduction" p. 3.

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areas of the garden be an indistinct line that emphasized a unified theme best characterized by the word "pleasure."

The landscape beyond the house, successively remodelled between 1902 and 1914, evolved from a picturesque park of specimen trees to a Classical Revival Arcadia with French-style pavilions, stables and Italian Renaissance-style fountains. These features illustrate the development of Classical Italian and French precepts of landscape theory and design in America at the turn of the century. The landscape was a result of the efforts of Horace Trumbauer, the architect of the house, and the Berwind's gardener, Bruce Butterson.

Horace Trumbauer (1868-1938) was commissioned to build The Elms. He was, like Berwind, of Philadelphia extraction and relatively unknown at the time in the world of American architecture. (However, Trumbauer was the only architect of his time to be admired by Ogden Codman, a popular architect and influential tastemaker in Newport and an ardent proponent of Classical design.) Trumbauer began as an apprentice in the offices of D.W. and G.W. Hewitt in Philadelphia.⁶ He ultimately became one of the few major American architects not trained at that prestigious school in Paris, the Ecole des Beaux Arts. Although he never received formal architectural training, he established his own practice at the age of 24. The informality of his training did not affect the monumental style of his work, and although he obtained all his knowledge of architecture and design in the United States, his interpretation of the Chateau d'Asnieres at The Elms is a masterful statement of the proportion, balance and harmony of 18th-century French design.

Trumbauer's specific area of expertise was the interpretation of 18th-century classical French architecture, and it is believed that "The Elms shows his earliest and perhaps fullest grasp of this sophisticated idiom."⁷ In an article written soon after The Elms was formally opened, the author comments,

Mr. Trumbauer has been especially fortunate in having had commissions of the very largest size, sumptuous palaces... environed in spacious and splendid grounds, and furnished within with all the grandeur of gorgeous furnishings.

⁶ Jordy, William H., and Christopher P. Monkhouse. *Buildings on Paper*. Brown University, Rhode Island Historical Society and Rhode Island School of Design, 1982, p. 235.

⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 177-8.

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One such commission would have made the name and fortune of many an architect. What can be said of the man who has had a dozen or more such commissions?⁸

Trumbauer occupies a primary position in the history of American architecture through the monumental body of his work that included not only The Elms, but also the Widener Library at Harvard University, the original campus of Duke University, the Philadelphia Museum of Art (with Zantzinger, Borie, and Medary), the Harrison Estate "Grey Towers" in Pennsylvania (now Beaver College and a National Historic Landmark), Shadowlawn, the estate of Hubert T. Parson in New Jersey (also a National Historic Landmark), and such Newport houses as Miramar, Chetwode, and Clarendon Court.

Horace Trumbauer was the acknowledged finest practitioner of the French classical tradition in America, just as Richard Morris Hunt was the premier exponent of the Loire Valley chateaux tradition. The choice of a historical style was the most important decision to be made by architect and client and the newly rich Americans wanted palaces that broadcast their affluence. Modern French or Beaux Arts was one of the most favored styles and Trumbauer was also the best architect working in that opulent idiom at the turn of the century.

In addition to architecture, The Elms was the expression of the power and prestige of its owner, the coal baron Edward J. Berwind (1848-1936). Berwind was a man of national stature who required a residence of equal magnitude, for he served in the critical role of providing coal to the nation's transportation companies and the United States Navy. He was the single most influential owner of coal mines in the northeastern United States at the time The Elms was built, and was considered "a colleague and peer of Henry Clay Frick, Harvey Firestone, Andrew Carnegie, and Henry Ford."⁹ Possessing an unrestrained entrepreneurial resolve, he was president of a firm that "supplied 80,000 tons of coal per week to ships in New York harbor alone, was chief supplier to the U.S. Navy and Merchant Marine, and had outlets along the eastern seaboard, at Caribbean ports, and in France and Italy."¹⁰ He was, along with J. Pierpont Morgan, one of America's "great captains of industry," running the largest individually owned coal-producing firm in the country.¹¹ Mr. Berwind and his associates were the merchant princes of the American Renaissance; their building projects and collections of fine and decorative arts enhanced their financial and social image.

Edward J. Berwind was born in 1848, the second son in a family of five sons and two daughters. By 1870, his father, John Paulus Berwind, was a partner in Prestien and Berwind, a prosperous piano supplier to Wanamaker's department store in Philadelphia. As a young man, Edward chose to pursue his education at the Annapolis Naval Academy, receiving his diploma directly from the hands of President Ulysses S. Grant upon graduation. Berwind's association with the president was extended when he was assigned to serve as Grant's naval aide.

Edward's older brother, Charles, had begun the Berwind-White coal company in 1874 with

⁸ Ferree, Barr. "Talks on Architecture," from *Scientific American Building Monthly*, (April 4, 1901), No. 4, p. 69.

⁹ *The History of Berwind*. Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: The Berwind Group, 1993, p. 32.

¹⁰ Benway, Anne. *A Guidebook to Newport Mansions*, Newport, Rhode Island: The Preservation Society of Newport County, 1984, p. 60.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

an associate, Allison White. After the death of Charles in 1890, Edward took over as president of the company. He maintained that position until the age of 80, serving at its helm for 40 years of great success and profit.

Following the advice of J.P. Morgan, Berwind adopted Morgan's aggressive tactics until he was the world's largest individual owner of coal-mining properties. He was president of six coal companies and director of four others. Through his close ties with J.P. Morgan, he diversified into railroads, steamships, docks, lumber and insurance companies. Over the years he became an officer or director of 50 companies. His vast coal-mining interests led him to supply fuel for various businesses, most notably the New York City Rapid Transit which built the Interborough Rapid Transit system (IRT). (For many years, he was the Chief Executive Officer of the IRT.) Throughout his life, Berwind avoided publicity but occasionally his tough policies on labor unions surfaced in the press. "He paid little attention to price competition, and he conducted his labor relations in a cavalier fashion. He refused to bargain with his employees, and his were the last non-union coal fields."¹²

Edward Berwind helped shape the pattern of industrial expansion and the economic course of this country. As the U.S. emerged as the industrial giant of the 20th century, he supported that industrialization by fueling a great share of its enterprises and serving its expanding resources.

Edward Berwind's social stature was enhanced by his wife Herminie, who was from a distinguished Philadelphia Quaker family. The Berwinds were among one of the few couples of American society who took an active role in choosing the works of art that would adorn their living spaces. From the selection of the antique silk for the draperies to the fine Venetian paintings of the life of Scipio Africanus, Mr. and Mrs. Berwind had a hand in the detailed arrangements of The Elms' interiors. In a *Newport Herald* article written just after the formal opening of the house on August 9, 1901, a critic writes that Mrs. Berwind had been

aiming at excellence in every respect throughout the house... no imitation of any kind has been permitted even in the less important apartments... and in excellence of execution the work cannot be surpassed. Mr. and Mrs. Berwind have superintended every detail and suggested all ideas.¹³

¹² Krooss, Herman E. "Berwind, Edward Julius," *Dictionary of American Bibliography*, Vol. XXII, Supplement Two. New York, New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1958, pp. 37-38.

¹³ *Newport Herald*, August 10, 1901.

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As Edith Wharton said in 1905, through one of her characters, these sorts of houses were founded on "the desire to imply that one has been to Europe, and has a standard," that in "America, every marble house with gilt furniture is thought to be a copy of the *Trianon*."¹⁴

The Elms, the Newport mansion and garden of Edward J. Berwind, is one of the finest mansions in this style and is also an important contributing resource in the Bellevue Avenue National Historic Landmark district.

¹⁴ Wharton, Edith. *The House of Mirth*, New York, Scribners, 1905, p. 160.

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Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- ☐ Preliminary Determination of Individual Listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
- ☒ Previously Listed in the National Register.
- ☐ Previously Determined Eligible by the National Register.
- ☐ Designated a National Historic Landmark.
- ☒ Recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey: #RI-344
- ☐ Recorded by Historic American Engineering Record: #

Primary Location of Additional Data:

- ☐ State Historic Preservation Office
- ☐ Other State Agency
- ☐ Federal Agency
- ☐ Local Government
- ☐ University
- ☒ Other (Specify Repository): Archives, Preservation Society of Newport County,
Newport, Rhode Island
Archives, Newport Historical Society, Newport, Rhode Island
Newport City Hall, Records of Deeds, Newport, Rhode Island

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

Acreage of Property: 11 acres

UTM References:	Zone	Easting	Northing
	A 19	306920	4594280
	B 19	307030	4594290
	C 19	307040	4594240
	D 19	307210	4594250
	E 19	307240	4594120
	F 19	306960	4594030

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Verbal Boundary Description:

The boundary of the property is the same as recorded in the deed of July 23, 1962, Land Evidence Book No. 206, pp. 556-58, held by the City Clerk's Office of Newport County, Rhode Island. The property is located in Plat 35, Lot 48. The property is bounded on the north by Bellevue Court, on the east by Bellevue Avenue, on the south by Dixon Street, and on the west by Spring Street.

Boundary Justification:

The boundary includes the mansion, gardens, statuary, stable and garage that have historically been part of The Elms estate and that maintain historic integrity.

11. FORM PREPARED BY

Name/Title: John Tschirch, Director of Education
and
Maxim Antinori, Assistant
The Preservation Society of Newport County
424 Bellevue Avenue
Newport, Rhode Island 02840
Telephone: 401/847-1000
Date: September 27, 1994

Edited by: Carolyn Pitts, Architectural Historian
National Historic Landmarks Survey
National Park Service/Washington Office
P.O. Box 37127, Suite 310
Washington, DC 20013-7127
Telephone: 202/343/8166
Date: July 6, 1995

NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARKS SURVEY

National Park Service/Washington Office: July 17, 1996